

Karen Fitzgerald

Artist Statement and Initial Concept

I was born and raised on a farm in Marathon County, Town of Emmet, Wisconsin. I continue as a tax-paying landowner, having purchased a large portion of our century-owned family farm. In 1998 I built a garden on the land and I tend it during visits with my siblings. As a professional visual artist with deep and continuing ties to Central Wisconsin, I am keenly interested in creating work for the Marshfield Clinic Lobby project.

Roundness is fundamental to my visual thinking. It is also a form noted for its healing and nurturing effects. For 25 years I have been working exclusively in the tondo form. It is uniquely able to convey a subtle energy of interconnection, wholeness and metaphysical purpose. I believe the energies within our physical world are interconnected; my work explores those energetic interconnections. Light suffuses our world – its energy shapes the mood of each day. I use color as pure light and physical energy, creating complex shades and tones that reconnect energies present in the everyday world with viewers' experiences.

My concept is to create a grouping of round, gilded, double-sided panels, painted with oil paint, that hang from within both soffits in the lobby ceiling, rotating gently with ambient air currents. To provide necessary clearance, the panels would range in size from approximately 20 – 30". Each soffit would contain a grouping of 3 – 7 panels. The faces of each panel will feature an aspect of the natural ecosystem that Marshfield is located in. Redwing blackbirds frequent the marshy areas in spring – their flocking and mating calls can be heard echoing across open fields. The native grasses and trees of the area; their seeds, leaf shapes and profiles also suggest a vocabulary for this grouping of works. The panels will feature several varieties of gold as well as other precious metals including copper and aluminum. I use gilding in a traditional way; not with a decorative intention, but as a cue. Gold is embedded in the core of our civilization, historically its dynamic energy often signaled something beyond the purely physical. The precious metals I gild with indicate a quality of energy that expands beyond our physical world, a quality that is metaphysical and transformative.

A secondary concept I might also explore is to create a mural on the ceiling of each soffit, in lieu of hanging panels. The imagery of these large, round, gilded murals would include similar imagery as the double-sided panels. I would design both compositions to be seen from a variety of angles.

Image #4, "Sparrow's Eye", demonstrates my capacity to create a circular composition that includes natural forms. The patterning on butterfly wings rhymes with images the Hubble telescope has sent back of the Universe. This composition is puzzle-like; it surprises viewers each

time they see it. Image #6, "Sea Calls to the Sky" demonstrates a similar idea - a circular composition with natural imagery. Here the imagery is more stylized and the entire composition somewhat more abstract. Images #7, 8, and 9 demonstrate the major role gilding plays in creating a distinctive energy within a round form.

Over the course of my experience as a professional artist, I have worked on a number of different commissions. Each one has been collaborative - and each collaboration different from the others. I've collaborated with an entire school community to create a large exterior mural. Students created drawings of ideas for the mural, which I then combined and refined for the finished composition, "Discovery of Dreams" (image #2). "Sparrow's Eye" was part of a suite of 13 images created in collaboration with composer Carl MaultsBy. I consider all commission work to be collaborative, and I am excited to learn more about the specific needs and wishes of the Marshfield Clinic community for this work of art.